



Dharma Orientated Education and Cultural Crisis

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Introduction –

‘Yastu Vijnanavan bhavati, Yuktana manasa sada’, Tasyendriyani vas’yani, Sadas’va iva saratheh” “He, who is possessed of supreme knowledge by concentration of mind, must have his senses under control, like spirited steeds controlled by a charioteer”. (Katha-Upanisad, III. 6) It is often said that education is the building up of the thinking elite of the nation, much of the nation’s future depends on its system of education. This is true to some extent. But conversely the general outlook of society also has a strong bearing on education itself, so education can only be reformed when a corresponding change has already begun in society, or at least when the necessity for such a change is being felt. This is the case especially in a period of crisis, when the established order of things is crumbling, when the ancient ideals have lost their hold, and youth is desperately in need of a guiding light, an ideal that can sustain its enthusiasm and carry it through the strenuous tasks of life. At such a time, when a reassessment of the fundamental values is essential, the importance of education is many times greater. It may be decisive if the educational body is able to discern the evolutionary trend and perceive the ideal of the new age. We may, therefore, Endeavour in this paper to look at the purpose of education, with the general conception of the aim of human life, prevalent during all times, and to analyze the present cultural crisis and the aims of education.

Keywords: Dharma, spirited, education, Upanishads, spiritual, social change, relationship, religion, ethics

Within the sector of education, Dharma (Virtues) orientation will have to be an integral component of the emerging educational model. Indeed any kind of education worth the name liberates an individual from the bonds of ignorance. ‘Sa Vidya ya vimuktaye’ has rightly been proclaimed by the Upanishads. The education must liberate the mind from dogmas and prepare it to face all the challenges of the present and future. The education must foster value-system in the individuals. The purpose of higher education should be to serve as the most powerful medium of social change and scientific discoveries and to awaken awareness to understand the world properly. The University and its role in national life was summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru in the convocation address to the Allahabad University in 1947 : “A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for

reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives.”

Purpose of education includes training of mind to achieve proper balance between the physical, psychic and spiritual aspects of life. When there is over-emphasis on the physical, the human qualities begin to decline and life becomes crude. In the psychic arena improper development leads to subtle exploitation and cultural domination of one group over the other without the spiritual side developing along with the physical and the psychic. Thus the world becomes tension-ridden and full of hypocrisy. People talk of peace and disarmament but war dominates their intentions. It is the task of education to understand and expose the duplicity and this should be the purpose of higher education, which is most powerful medium of social change. Here the question arises, what should be the aim of Universities in our country? A University should be the centre of liberal education. It is the duty of university education to produce the torch-bearer generation to conserve higher values, ethical ideals, national genius. It should produce the leaders of historical importance. It is supposed to elevate the man from the primitive to the sub-human, and from the sub-human to the ‘human’. It is proved that there is nothing more powerful, more unifying than the common higher ideals in life and they have come from the education of ‘Dharma’.

‘Now the other question arises, what is ‘Dharma’? All that ‘Dharma’ connotes requires to be explained. It is a comprehensive term and there is no word equivalent to it any other language. The word ‘dharma’ is derived from the root ‘dhr’, which means to sustain. It is the moral law, which sustains the world, human society and the individual. According to Manu, ingredients of ‘dharma’ are dhriti (satisfaction), ksama (patience), dama (self command or restraint), asteyam (non-stealing), s’auca (self purification, both external and internal), indriyanigrah (restraint of the organs of sense), dhi (intelligence or wisdom), vidya (knowledge of self-atmabodha), satya (truth), akrodha (nonanger). According to Manu, dharma is duty in an ethical sense and has sociological significance. In fact, we know the man by his dharma, we know any object by its dharma. For example, the dharma of fire is to burn, the sun is to shine and so on. Similarly, every man has his own dharma, which distinguishes him from the rest of his fellow-men. Dharma cannot be translated as a bundle of taboos imposed on the individual by the group in which he is born. It is not mere folkways and more, it is the inborn nature of the individual and stage of his psycho-physical evolution. It is his duty to himself, and to the group, arising out of the intellectual perception of his place in the scale of life. To live in accord with this note of one’s self is the swiftest path of progress. If this principle is ignored, education can only help to produce “articulate animals”, who will be ready to prostitute their powers of intellect in exploitation of their ignorant fellowmen.

According to Bhagavad-Gita, non-violence in thought, word, and deed, truthfulness and geniality of speech, absence of anger even on provocation, renunciation of the idea of doer ship in action, tranquility of mind, refraining from malicious gossip, kindness to all creatures, absence of attachment to the objects of senses, even during their contact with the senses, mildness, sense of

shame in doing thing not sanctioned by the scriptures or usage, abstaining from idle pursuits, sublimity, forgiveness, fortitude, external and internal purity, absence of malice or anger, absence of the feeling of self-importance; are the qualities of learned men.

Indian national ideal was dharma, is dharma, and will be dharma. Virtue, righteousness, duty, sound relationship, religion, ethics, spirituality -all are contained in dharma. The harmonies functioning of the cosmos is based on it. Even according to the great Mauryan emperor As'oka, the 'Dharma', manifests itself in akshati (non-injury); samyama (restraint); samacharanam (equal treatment) and mardavam (mildness in respect of all creature, human beings as well as beasts and birds). The practical side of dharma is also emphasised in an abundance of good deeds (bahu kayane) and also freedom from sin (apasinavam). Practical dharma is 'code of duties' which is described as comprising the daya (kindness), danam (liberality), satyam (truthfulness), s'aucam (inner and outer purity), mardavam (gentleness), sadhuta (saintliness) and apa-vyayata and apabhandata (moderation in spending and saving). These essentials of moral conduct has been related to all phases of life. Following these practices man is able to make progress in life and develop character.

The concept of 'dharma' is all comprehensive and may be said to comprise precepts which aim at securing the material and spiritual substances and growth of the individual and society. Dharma is not static. The content of dharma often changed in the changing contexts of time, place and social environment. No one uniform set of dharma, can be applicable to all the ages.

An ideal student is dedicated to humanity. The cosmos is revealing itself as Jana, Des'a, Dharma; people, country and Dharma. Education is considered as a powerful instrument of change. Higher education has been called 'investment in man' as well as 'investment in future'. Therefore higher education must be imparted to only those young children who can really contribute something to their nation and society for all the times.

Religion is one, though its manifestations are many. Varieties of religions are like the various species of flowers. Some names and forms perish through the ages. There can be no substitute for the belief, that one is secure in one's religion.

Food to one need not necessarily be food to another. Let each be nourished with the food best suited to him. People all over the world have divergent food and different food habits, but nourishment and growth are common to all. This law has to be extended to the realm of religion. The existence of varieties in relations need not be deplored or discountenanced. Recognition of all of them is a sure means to create congenial mental climate. As an expert gardener provides ways and means to rear varieties of flower plants, the Indian educational atmosphere also nourishes in all shades of faith and beliefs. India has ever been the one country in the world, where all forms of religion meet and thrive. To a superficial observer, nature offers disharmony, one force working counter to another. But for this conflict, concord would not be impossible. For example there would be no game of football if there is not the contention of one team against another. Opposing forces are necessity in the working of nature. This fact applies most to the functioning of the mind. By the training of mind, man avails himself of intellectual conflicts and controversies. There are

many tendencies, dispositions and outlooks of life as there are human beings. The path of one need not necessarily be the path of another. While strictly adhering to one's own path, permitting another to pursue his path, is tolerance concomitant with harmony of religions. Do not merely be satisfied with labelling oneself as belonging to this or that religion. Plants and trees are known by their flowers and fruits. Religions are known by the characters shaped by them. While theories of religions are found to vary but their practical aspects are more or less the same everywhere. The student should therefore be taught to set aside theorizing and take to practicing it as ardently as possible. Bigotry and fanaticism are born of ignorance. They usurp and taint the mind of man under the mask of religion. Customs and manners among people may be opposed to one another, still their hearts beat in unison through life and death, when their commonly shared religious ideal are same. There is nothing more powerful, more unifying than the common higher ideals in life and they have come from religions. Society must allow for moral and psychological differences in human beings. Social progress is insured when social conflicts are eliminated.

Anyone ignorant of his own dharma and other great religions of India shall not be graduated by any of the Indian Universities. While holding fast to one's own religion, one should learn to love other religions because of one being rightly educated, because education is considered as a powerful instrument of change. It is the duty of the Indian genius to analyses the position and evolves a bold scheme for reorientation of educational pattern at the University level, with a view to raising on army of neo-graduate stepped in hoary culture of the motherland and dedicate to make the environment of peace and harmony and to rise above the cultural crises.

And the 'Mother' also hints for the future education : 'then will begin a new education, which can be called 'supramental education', it will, by its all powerful action, work not only upon the consciousness of individual beings, but upon the very substance of which they are built and upon the environment in which they live. In brief, one can say that this education will result in a transformation of the nature itself, a transformation of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards superman, leading in the end to the appearance of the divine race upon earth'.

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